

**AMENDMENTS TO THE SPECIFICATION:**

*Please amend paragraph [013] as follows:*

In one embodiment of the present invention, a method is provided for operating a fuel cell comprising, for example, a plurality of unit cells, each of which comprises a polymer electrolyte membrane, a pair of electrodes sandwiching the polymer electrolyte membrane, and electroconductive separators on either electrode. The cell stack generates electricity with the supply of a fuel gas to one of the electrodes and an oxidant gas to the other of the electrodes. The method comprises the steps of: determining an electric output of a single unit cell or a group of unit cells after the stoppage of the supply of fuel gas and oxidant gas, and comparing the electric output to a predetermined value, e.g., determining whether the single unit cell or group of cells has an electric output above or below a predetermined value or values. If the electric output falls below a certain predetermined value value, the cell or group of cells are determined to be defective.

*Please amend paragraph [050] as follows:*

FIG. 4 shows a graph of the voltage difference between the average voltage of normal unit cells and the voltage of the unit cell developing pinholes versus time. In order to detect a unit cell developing pinholes with high precision, the judgment is preferably made based on the time period when the voltage difference between normal unit cells and the unit cell developing pinholes is most significant. As is apparent from FIG. 4, it is ~~about~~ after approximately 5 minutes after the stoppage of the supply of the fuel gas that the greatest voltage difference was observed.